

State Funding Available to Help Fix Distressed Cemeteries

DOVER – The Division of Public Health would like to remind property owners that funding is available to support the many small and older cemeteries that often lack the funds for long-term care and maintenance. The Distressed Cemetery Fund was established in 2009 to provide for the preservation of cemeteries by supporting repair and improvement projects that are outside normal maintenance activities. Cemeteries must be registered before they can apply for Distressed Cemetery Funds.

The Fund, which is overseen by the Delaware Cemetery Board, is maintained by receiving \$2.00 from every death certificate sold and registration fees. Individuals and organizations may also make contributions or bequests to the Distressed Cemetery Fund. The maximum amount available from the Fund to each cemetery is \$10,000 every two years, but a financial assistance request must be matched with real dollars and/or documented volunteer hours.

Applications must be submitted two weeks before a scheduled board meeting, along with pictures of the area needing repairs, financial information, a small scale map, and three written vendor quotes. By receiving funds, the applicant must agree to erect a sign (if none exist) with the cemetery name and contact telephone number in case of an emergency or vandalism. A written closeout report is required six months after the receipt of the award, along with pictures of the work completed, canceled checks to the vendor, and vendor invoices paid. In the past, funds have been used to repair tombstones/monuments, repair or replace fences/stonewalls/gates, landscaping, remove trees and brush,

purchase or repair lawn equipment, purchase sheds, topsoil and seeding, conducting of perimeter surveys and plot plans.

In Fiscal Year 2016, seven cemeteries received awards totaling \$62,437.50. Funds were used to repair and restore tombstones, fences, stone walls, and gates, and to remove trees and brush. The seven cemeteries are:

- Hartly United Methodist Church Cemetery
- Little Creek Friends Burial Ground
- Montgomery Family Cemetery
- Mt. Zion Cemetery
- Riverview Cemetery
- Sailors Bethel United Methodist Church Cemetery
- Wilmington & Brandywine Cemetery

The next Delaware Cemetery Board meeting will be held at 10:30 a.m., November 9, 2016, at the Modern Maturity Center, East Conference Room, 1121 Forrest Ave., Dover. Meeting information can be found on the State's [Public Meeting Calendar](#).

The Division of Public Health (DPH) would like to remind cemetery owners that state law requires them to register cemeteries with the Division every five years (or until a change in ownership). The registration form can be found on [DPH's website](#). The registration fee is \$10.00 and fines may be charged for expired registrations.

The five members of the Delaware Cemetery Board are appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Services, with administrative support provided by the Division of Public Health. In addition to administering the Fund, the Cemetery Board is authorized to: promulgate rules and regulations for the registration of cemeteries; designate a cemetery as "distressed" based on standards set forth in the rules and regulations; authorize payment to a distressed cemetery from the Fund; require a thorough accounting of each recipient's use of money from the Fund; receive and forward to

appropriate agencies of the State, or other organizations, complaints from any person relating to a Delaware cemetery; and address specific cemetery issues as requested by the Governor or the General Assembly.

All theft or vandalism should immediately be reported to the local police. The Board refers complaints to the police, Delaware Attorney General's Consumer Protection Agency, the Better Business Bureau, or city/county officials.

To learn about registering a cemetery, or for more information on the Distressed Cemetery Fund visit: <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hp/DECB.html> and <http://delcode.delaware.gov/title29/c079a/index.shtml> (29 Del. C., c. 79A).

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.